

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. When a controversial program is considered for airing during any political campaign, and especially during a presidential campaign, it should be aired early in the campaign season, not in the last days. By giving all parties adequate time to speak to the issues raised by such a program, the democratic process might actually be served. But, when such a program is aired late in the campaign season functioning really as just a smear, the electorate is not allowed the opportunity to reach an informed conclusion about the content. As a result, the democratic process, rather than being served by this form of "free speech" is severely harmed. Any station participating in such behavior should be carefully examined with regard to its public service commitments when the time comes for license renewal.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more vigorous review with actively sought public comment. Thank you.